

Attached strings may undo latest gift-giving effort

By JoAnn Jacobsen-Wells
Deseret News staff writer

Utah millionaire industrialist James L. Sorenson, who recently had trouble giving the University of Utah \$15 million, is again having problems making a gift.

Wasatch County Commissioners say they won't know until Monday if they can accept Sorenson's offer to donate 160 acres of right of way for the county's new \$11 million highway that connects Heber City and Kamas.

Sorenson was not available for comment Saturday night, but county officials said there are too many strings attached to the gift.

County Commissioner Pete Coleman said Sorenson has been paying taxes on the property, based on 20 percent of its actual assessed value.

Although the land is along the south side of what will be the Jordanelle Reservoir — and thus has greatly increased in value — Coleman said the assessment is based on the land's inclusion in a greenbelt area given favorable property tax treatment.



James L. Sorenson

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State law requires that when the land is sold for use other than agriculture, the seller must pay five years' back taxes at the regular rate.

Coleman said Sorenson wants the county to pay the back taxes, and commissioners don't think they have the legal authority to do so.

But the gift-giving dilemma is even more complicated.

Officials of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which financed the highway, want 200 additional acres of Sorenson's 6,600 acres (property he purchased from Shell Oil) for use on the reservoir.

But Sorenson, they say, has object-

ed to the amount of money they have offered him for the land.

This has frustrated bureau negotiators, who insist the new road has enhanced the value of his property and therefore Sorenson is already getting a benefit out of the Jordanelle project.

"Sorenson has objected to the amount they have offered him for the reservoir property, but more than the money, what the man wants is the development on that 200 acres to be consistent with the development he would like to do on the rest of the property," one official involved in the dealings said.

Sorenson has told the county and other agencies that he would like to develop a hotel and recreation village on his property, and on some of the land that has been taken by the Bureau of Reclamation.

"At one time, he even wanted the development to be in his name," the official said.

Coleman said negotiations for land uses on federal ground are the concern of the U.S. government — and not the county.

However, if the bureau amended its condemnation suit to include the road, the gift issue is moot because the Bureau of Reclamation would then own the road too.

Coleman said such an amendment may have been filed Friday.

This would represent a second snag in another of Sorenson's apparent attempts to be altruistic.

Last month he took back a \$15 million gift to the U. when the public decried the administration's decision to name the University of Utah Medical Center and School of Medicine in his honor.

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88 Games did y as well as harm, environmentalis

By Robert Rice
Deseret News staff writer

While Utah environmentalists lie dormant during the state's bid for the 1998 Winter Olympics, conservationists in Calgary waged war with 1988 Winter Olympic organizers.

The Canadian ecology movement played a major role in Calgary's Olympic movement. Some Canadians attribute Calgary's loss of the 1976 Games to Innsbruck, Austria, to environmental protests against a Canadian Olympics.

Still, although conservationists did their best in the past to snuff an Olympic flame in Canada and took organizers to task — and to court — during 1988 Olympic preparations, many reserve praise for Calgary's Winter Olympics.

Little environmental controversy surrounded the Calgary Olympics until organizers abandoned plans to use an existing ski area for Olympic events in favor of carving a new resort from a mountainside in a pristine national park.

Organizers chose to build from scratch a \$25 million ski area now called Nakiska on a wind-swept mountain previously best known for the region's healthiest herd of big horn sheep.

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